2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Chapter II

THE SHILLUK

131 The Shilluk country forms a narrow fringe on the west bank of the Nile, from Kaka in the north to within 30 miles of Lake No in the south. From Kodok to Taufikia the Shilluk also occupy the east bank, and their villages extend some 35 miles up the Sobat River, principally on the north bank. Theirs is the flat grass country, 132 dry in the dry season, swampy in the wet, extending on both sides 433 of the Nile; hence cattle are their wealth and principal care, and 231 although a considerable quantity of millet is grown not enough is ●243 harvested to provide fully for the relatively dense population, and scarcity is by no means unusual. A census taken in 1903 gave a population of nearly 40,000, possessing over 12,000 head of cattle 161 and nearly 64,000 sheep and goats. No doubt the number of cattle returned was unduly low, but, making all allowances, the Shilluk are poorer in cattle than are the Dinka. The 1903 figure is far below that suggested by Schweinfurth (1,200,000), and at the present time it is likely that the Shilluk number some 100,000.

We have stated in Chapter I that in our opinion the homeland of 171 the Shilluk-speaking tribes lay to the east of Lake Victoria. We have 174 no historical record of a northerly movement, all we can say is that a series of migrations gave rise to a number of tribes speaking Shilluk dialects in what is now the Bahr el Ghazal Province, and that from one of these, the Luo, the Shilluk nation of history originated.

[114] The researches of the Rev. Father Hofmayr of the Austrian Mission[1] indicate that the Luo—the Shilluk-speaking "Jur"—of the Bahr el Ghazal Province represent the remains of what was once a greater Luo people, from whom are derived the present Shilluk nation, or, more accurately, a certain number of their leading families including that of the king. Here in the neighbourhood of the present Luo country, the land of Dimo of the legends, Nyakang—the leader, culture-hero, and first king of the Shilluk—lived with his half-brother's son, Dimo, until the enmity of the latter drove Nyakang and his followers to seek fresh homes to the east and so brought into existence

[1] Wilhelm Hofmayr, *Die Schilluk. Geschichte, Religion und Leben eines Niloten-Stammes*, Wien, 1925.

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

wooden handle. The hoer sits on the ground or squats on one knee or both, as he chooses, and catching the grass with one hand cuts it off just under the surface with the hoe. Shaking the dirt from the roots of the weeds he throws them into piles, leaving the ground clean and smooth. It is a good surface cultivation, suitable for this soil and climate, and when the season is favorable, the yield for the amount of ground tilled is very good.

The Indian corn grown by the Shullas is a small early variety, which is in roasting ear a fortnight before the early dura is ready for parching. But before any grain is harvested a sort of first fruits' sacrifice is made, an old man and woman go to the various fields of the village and bring in some of the ripening ears of corn and heads of dura, and place them by the sacred house of the village. Some is later taken and ground and mixed with water and plastered on the side of the sacred tukl, the rest is taken by the people and some put on the door of their own houses, and some is carefully tied up within. When the dura is ready for harvesting, the heads are cut off short with a clam shell and heaped upon a rack made of poles resting upon forked posts about two feet above the ground. After drying a month it is flailed out with heavy clubs by the men and winnowed by the women and carried to the village, where it is stored in large barrel shaped bins made of coarse grass. The bottom of the large basket granary is oval, a grass band wrapped with rope is formed about the small base and resting in the forks of short stakes driven in the ground bears the weight of the filled basket and keeps it off the ground and free from ants.

There are very many varieties of dura. One man gave me the names of thirty-two varieties. It is probable however that the same variety has different names in different localities.

Dura is eaten in a variety of ways. The earliest heads are simply thrown on the fire and roasted. It is often merely boiled till softened and eaten so. A great deal is made into a mild beer and used as a regular food diet. The popular way of cooking it is to grind it into a fine meal and cook it into a mush and eat it with milk, or cook it up with meat. It is sometimes boiled with beans, and sesame is often eaten with it. A sort of dura bread is also made.

The Shulla retains all of his pastoral instincts and prizes his flocks and herds above all else. His sheep are very inferior in size and have no wool where wool ought to grow. His goats are small and few are good milk producers. His cows are also generally poor in milking qualities, but are fair in size and in beef conformation. They belong to the Indian breed of cattle, which have the hump on the wethers.

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

233 [492] Tribal custom forbids the Shulla from riding upon a donkey, so he never possesses one. Cattle are never used for draught or carrying purposes, so he has no beasts of burden, and perhaps never will so long as women are plentiful.

231 [262] The villages are full of hunting dogs. Unlike the Nuers and most of the Dinkas the Shulla raise chickens. They are a degenerate Mediterranean strain. Eggs are eaten only by women and children.

Animal life must be well guarded and carefully housed at night most of the year. If an animal loiters on the river bank it most likely becomes the food of a crocodile. If one strays off into the woods it probably becomes the prey of a hyena, leopard or lion. Myriads of flies and numerous varieties of ticks also prey upon the flocks and herds, tormenting them by night as well as by day, and transmit the germs of various diseases also. Texas or tick fever is nearly always present, and a trypanosome not so fatal as the one of dreaded tsetse fly is also prevalent. The plague is a frequent visitor too and the mouth and foot diseases often attack the cattle toward the close of the dry season. The annual loss from all these enemies of animal life is very heavy, but as no females, unless barren, are ever killed for food or sold, and grass is plentiful, on the whole there is an increase in the number of live stock raised.

241 [797 177] As to the possibilities of agriculture in the Shulla land obstacles to be overcome have been mentioned. What the mission has done shows that many varieties of fruits and a considerable number of vegetables may be grown. Future generations may have lumber, if the right varieties of forest trees are planted. Cotton is not a sure rain crop, but with irrigation it has few enemies. Sugar-cane and rice can be grown in favorable places. The soil of this part of the Sudan is not generally deep, is deficient in nitrogen and very poor in humus. Nitrogen may be restored with legumes, but the humus problem is difficult, for the white ants devour very quickly all manure, mulch etc. spred upon the ground.

243 The Shulla in sticking to the one main crop of dura has after all adopted the grain which is naturally adapted to the soil and climate and yields best to his methods of farming.

5. Foods and food-stuffs.

262

kwǫ́n a kind of dura-bread or mush.
àkʤlǫ́ a food of dura.
àpʤtǫ́ a food of dura.
àrɛ́yǫ́ a food of dura (prepared after Arab fashion).
àdʤlǫ́ a food of dura (prepared after Arab fashion).
mǫ́nandr a food of dura with fat, eaten without anything else.
mǫ́kɔ̀ɔ̀ʤtį a common dura-food.

21: Mutwakil U-5 (1946) 1947 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

TYPES OF DURA USED BY SHILLUK AND DINKA

by Hasan Mutwakil

Introduction

123 In making this note I am quite aware of the fact that I have been in the Upper Nile Province for so short a time that I cannot guarantee its accuracy in every particular. It is the outcome of personal experience and observation and enquiries made among Shilluks and settled northerners (*Gellāba*), and should be accepted as such. If, however, in the course of future investigation any doubt arises with regard to my information, I will do my best to correct or confirm what I now venture to put on record.

Groups and Varieties

243 1. *Lwalli* is the Shilluk name for the 'early red dura.'

This dura is early in the sense that it is sown earlier than other crops. But it includes quick-maturing varieties as well as comparatively late-maturing varieties.

The word 'red' is not a precise description, as the colour of the grain is by no means uniform. The dura exhibits a large mixture of colours from dark red to white, most probably the result of crossing. All these colours can be produced in one field, often from plants in the same hole.

Lwalli includes a large number of sub-varieties, of which the following are more common :—

Toro, a tall plant, late-maturing, seeds pink
Othech ,, ,, ,, ,,
Nyalwalding, dwarf, quick-maturing
Nyakino, dwarf, quick-maturing, seeds dark red.
Wer Jal Nyigara, dwarf, quick-maturing
Nyanwar, ,, ,, ,,
Nyafirwat, ,, ,, ,,
Nyanbar, ,, ,, ,,
Nyachogo, ,, ,, ,, White
Yonongo, ,, ,, ,, Brownish red
Chiat alij, ,, ,, ,,

21: Mutwakil U-5 (1946) 1947 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23
Dinka FJ12

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It is very difficult to distinguish between the plants or the seeds of these different sub-varieties. Certainly I cannot recognize the differences myself, but I also doubt whether the Shilluk can do so without being misled quite often. All these sub-varieties are generally treated, and behave, in the same way. They are sown early in June, reach maturity in 90-100 days, (exceptions are the heavy sub-varieties), and are harvested in mid-September in a normal year.

2. *Rwat* is the Dinka name for the Shilluk *lwalli*.

D 243

The same sub-varieties exist among the Dinka, and the names given above for the sub-varieties are used by them.

It is also grown as an early crop in Dinka land, but in much smaller quantities, as a subsistence crop only.

3. *Jak* is the Dinka name for the heavy, late-maturing dura. It is the Dinka main crop, and has several sub-varieties, of which those commonly known are :—

Awet	Seed colour white.
Kuchuka	" " yellowish.
Kwayan	" " orange red.

Again seed colour is not as pure as the above description may convey. A mixture of colours is always a usual sight in a field of this dura.

All sub-varieties of the *Jak* are considered as heavy or late-maturing. They are usually sown early in July, reach maturity in about six months, and are harvested towards the end of December.

4. *Agono* meaning ' white dura ' is the Shilluk name for the Dinka *Jak*.

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The same sub-varieties and their names as above are also used by the Shilluk. As a crop plant, however, the *Agono* is grown but little in the Shilluk district, except among the southern Shilluk between Malakal and Tonga, where it is grown as a main crop.

5. *Angul*, meaning in Shilluk, ' dura of the wind,' is a winter dura. The name refers to no one variety, but actually any crop which is sown so late in the rains that it benefits from the cool north (winter) wind, is known to the Shilluk as *angul*.

S [132]

As the wet period from which the *angul* may be expected to benefit is very short, it is natural that only quick-maturing varieties are selected for the purpose.

[i.e., early red dura. - Analyst]

21: Mutwakil U-5 (1946) 1947 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

243 for the purpose. These are generally the lighter *lwalli* sub-varieties (e.g., *nyalwalding* and *nyanbar*).

Angul is generally sown in the middle of September, Being a *lwalli* sub-variety it matures in 90-100 days, and is therefore harvested in the second half of December.

General

1. I have not heard of the name *lwalli* being applied to maize, but maize may be, and in fact is, very rarely sown as *angul*. The yields obtained from such a crop are usually poor.

2. It may be of interest to note that *jak* or *agono*, is the most flood-resistant dura variety in this area. It tolerated continuous water-logging for more than 40 days in the 1946 rain season.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

but unfortunately for him, grass and weeds have a way of pushing up along with the grain and so, several times during the growing season he is forced to go out to his plantation and put in a day's weeding. If he is unduly industrious, he will plant beans, marrows, or pumpkins amongst the millet, and may even clear another patch and grow some maize; yet these are luxury crops—asparagus and strawberries, as it were—growing more quickly than millet and serving to fill up the lean time between the finishing up of one year's crop and the harvesting of the next.

The first month or so of the rainy season is a time of great anxiety as to whether the rains will be sufficient to sustain the growing crops. Sometimes the planting operation is attended with disappointments; a prolonged drought sets in and the young plants wither and die. A torrential downpour gives the husbandman new hope and out he goes to plant again, but this time one storm of rain after another washes the young shoots out of the ground. A third time he plants, and this time the fates are kind; the seed takes firm root and with constant and not too violent rain flourishes and gives promise of a good harvest; however by this time it is mid-July or even later, so that the crop will be late in ripening and he will be hungry before he can harvest it. The first crop to be planted is red millet which grows and matures more quickly than the second variety, the white millet. If conditions are favourable the original sowing is firmly established by the end of July, and he proceeds to the planting of the second variety. This is more hardy when growing and more resistant in store to the depredations of ants and weevils, but it is ravaged by the myriad flocks of weaver birds which descend upon the ripening fields and by the animals of the forest which gorge upon the crops to such an extent that sometimes they kill themselves by going to drink immediately after filling their stomachs with the unripe grain.

The plants which survive the attacks of flood and drought, of insect, bird and beast grow to a height of eight to ten feet with stalks half an inch thick supporting the heavy oval-shaped heads of grain. The red millet is ready for harvest

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

about mid-October, and then the large heads of grain are cut off and stacked on tables to dry out before being loaded into baskets and carried off to the village by the women. The stalks are left standing in the fields to be collected when they are needed. For the time being, then, the Shilluk is contented, having plenty to eat and drink. If the harvest has not been too good, he still has enough food for the next six months, and beyond that he refuses to look. Why should he worry about next year when he might be dead by then? His wife, equally thriftless, will load her basket with the golden grain and set off to the nearest merchants, perhaps ten or fifteen miles away, to exchange it for a handful of piastres. She knows full well that before the next rains have even begun she will have to go back to the same merchant to buy back her grain at twice the price she was given for it, or watch her family struggle in semi-starvation for the remainder of the year, but that does not deter her from crossing the road from the grain store to the general store run by the same merchant and squandering her money on a few strings of beads, a few feet of copper wire, a small mirror or such other trifles.

In the new year, when the swamps and khors are draining back to the Nile and the tall grass is drying and yellowing under the fierce heat of the sun, it is time to think of re-building and re-thatching. A well-made house will stand the rigours of perhaps ten rainy seasons; a good thatched roof for two or three. After the roof has been renewed three times, the cracking and crumbling walls are beyond further patching up, and the house must be pulled down and rebuilt. Building is a community affair, and the builders are paid for their labour in beer, the brewing of large quantities of which is an essential preparation for the work.

If a new hut is to be built, a circle of about twelve feet in diameter is marked out on the ground and a shallow trench dug round the circumference. Stakes are driven into this every six inches, so that they stand four feet above the ground, and these are bound together by coarsely plaited grass ropes woven around and in and out from bottom to top.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

a Bareth of the shrine before which the sacrifice is made. 782
The king or chief who is present and who dedicates the 787
offering stands by and leads public prayer to Nyikang for 825
the blessing sought. The meat of the sacrifice is eaten by all [262]
present with special perquisites for the Bareth guardian of [193]
the shrine. Care is taken when cutting up the meat not to
break any bones. These are collected and thrown into the
Nile. The horns are stuck in the ground in front of the shrine, [237]
and the skin, scraped and cleaned, remains in the shrine as
a mat for the spirit that dwells therein.

When the new corn is cut, tithes are given to Nyikang. 243 ●
Part of these belong to the Bareth and the remainder is 782
ground into flour and made into a thin porridge which is
poured on to the ground in front of and inside the shrine as
a libation to the residing spirit.